

CATHOLIC THEATRE

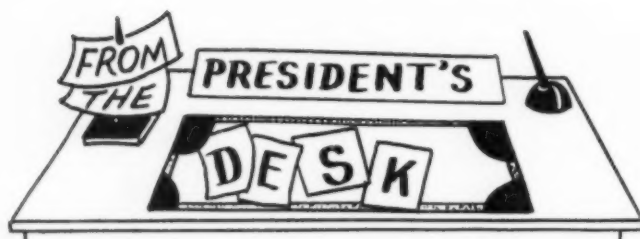
PUBLISHED MONTHLY, OCTOBER THROUGH MAY, BY THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC THEATRE CONFERENCE



INTERNATIONAL THEATRE

COVER: A richly-decorated actor performs in the classic Chinese Theatre. Tradition dictates the exact costume and makeup for the role being played. Father Ivar S. McGrath of the Society of St. Columban reports on the Chinese theatre in this issue.

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In place of my usual column this month, I am printing the Executive Office Report which was delivered to the Legislative Assembly in Chicago. I think that it will be of interest to all since it gives a comprehensive, although abridged, summary of the scope of Conference activity. The By-Laws passed by the Assembly together with notice of a Constitutional Revision of the Articles rewording the purpose and enlarging the Board to ten members, will be printed together as a unit later when we have cleared certain matters pertaining to incorporation. In the next issue I will also include other important matters approved by the Assembly.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE REPORT

The following account is that of activity during the period from June 1, 1958 to December 1, 1958.

MEMBERSHIPS

The National Catholic Theatre Conference is the largest national theatre organization with a total membership of 3929.

As of December 1, after two billings—one on September 1, the other on December 1—there are 69 accounts of dues receivable and five lapsed memberships.

The tallies for the various categories of membership are: Life Members: Individuals 6, High School 2, Sustaining Members: College 3, Individual 1, Community Theatre 2. Regular Members: C.Y.O. groups 8, Childrens Theatre 2, Community Theatre 23, College 135, High School 397, Individual 31, Junior College 1, Seminary 5, Total: 602. *Catholic Theatre* Subscribers: C.Y.O. 1, College 17, High School 61, Individual 38, Junior College 1, Libraries 1, College 1, High School 1, Public 1, Novitiate 1, Total: 122.

Drama Critique One Year Subscribers: College 12, High School 15, Individual 34, Junior College 2, Libraries: College 19, High School 1, Novitiate 1, Public 4, University 13, Total Libraries 38, Novitiate 1, Seminary 1, Total 1 Year Subscribers: 103.

Drama Critique Two Year Subscribers: College 1, High School 1, Individual 5, Libraries: College 3, High School 1, Universities 6, Seminary 2, Total Libraries: 12. Total 2-Year Subscription: 19.

Package Subscriber: College 3, Community 1, High School 5, Individual 21, Junior College 2, Libraries: College 13, High School 1, Universities 9, Total Libraries 23. Total Package subscribers: 55.

Affiliate (Student): 2/1, 156; 10/1, 2858; Total 3014 Colleges, 11 (326 Aff.), High School 51 (2532 Aff.) Total Affiliates: 3929.

REGIONS AND UNITS

There are Twelve Regions, each headed by a Regional Chairman. Within these twelve Regions are 29 Units headed by 40 Unit Chairmen and Co-Chairmen.

The following Regional and Unit activities have been reported for the period since June 1, 1958: Directors' Meet (Nebraska); Central Regional Convention (Chicago); Blue Ridge Regional Convention (Wheeling, West Va.); Mid-Atlantic Regional theatre Day (Immaculata, Pa.); West Central Regional Convention (Wichita, Kansas); Texas Regional Play Festival (San Antonio, Texas); the Chicago Drama Festival; the Genesian Drama Festival (Detroit, Michigan); Theatre Day (Miami, Florida); Twin Cities Play Festival (St. Paul, Minn.).

One new Unit was created in the Southern Region, The Louisiana Unit under the Chairmanship of Leo Zinser of Loyola University, New Orleans.

College Co-Chairmen were appointed in the Greater N. Y. and the New Jersey Units. High School Chairmen were appointed in Pennsylvania (election); Maryland; and San Francisco.

SECRETARIAL

The Executive Office has received a total of 1838 letters. The letters contain orders for material, inquiries on plays and on methods or organization of parish and community theatres, requests for royalty reductions. Most other correspondence deals with Board, Regional and Unity and Committee and publication affairs.

There has been a pattern of an increase in orders, a decrease in royalty and service requests and an increase of requests for publishers and scripts of musical plays.

A personal letter of welcome was sent to each new member and subscriber along with membership card, bulletin stating general aims, regulations and types of service, St. Genesius Prayer Card, full-length and one act play lists, library holdings list and back issues of publications for the current term. Since the beginning of November, the play lists and holdings list have not been sent because of depletion of stock.

Approximately 12,546 pieces of mail have been sent in this period including letters, invoices, membership cards and committee volunteer letters, ballots, Convention programming material, letters for High School Associate Editor, one issue of *Critique*, two issues of *Catholic Theatre*, advertising rate sheets and contracts for *Catholic Theatre*. This represents an increase of 4,436 pieces over the similar period last year.

The secretarial office at Rochester was closed in August as an unsatisfactory distribution of work and as a too-costly arrangement. Mr. Smett relinquished the post of acting executive secretary for employment in T.V. public relations.

The Executive Office was moved from its location in Room 110B of St. Mary's High School to two rooms in the new faculty residence. One room serves as office; the other, as storage and work room.

The office regularly employs one full time secretary and one part time secretary.

An efficient method of achieving an Addressograph breakdown was devised by Stanley Cieslar of the St. Mary's Faculty through the use of vari-colored lock tabs. By reason of the new system, quick mailings are possible for the various categories of members. It is possible, moreover, to identify immediately not only the category but also the term of membership, the fact of payments, and the members having affiliates.

New equipment was purchased for typing, bookkeeping, and folding.

EDITORIAL

The Editorial Office of Catholic Theatre was transferred in September from Rochester to Clarke College, Dubuque, Iowa. The Circulation Office at Columbus was closed in September and transferred to the Executive Office.

The following appointments were made for *Catholic Theatre*: George Herman, Clarke College, Editor; Associate Editor: Sister Honora, O.P. (for feature and High School news); Sister Mary Olive, S.P. (for college and fraternity news).

The name CRITIQUE was changed to DRAMA CRITIQUE at the instance of other publications of the same or similar names.

The Editorial Office of DRAMA CRITIQUE was transferred from Rochester to Mercy College, Detroit, Michigan. Printing has been transferred from Besig Lithograph, Buffalo, N. Y. to Detroit, Michigan.

The following appointments were made for *Drama Critique*: Sister M. Marguerite, R. S. M., Mercy College, Editor; Donald H. Dickinson, Loyola U., Chicago, Associate Editor; George Herman, Clarke College Dubuque, Iowa, Associate Editor; Rev. Thomas Bresnahan, Mercy College Detroit, Advisory Editor; Rev. James Farrell, O.S.A., Villanova University, Advisory Editor; Richard Duprey, Villanova University; Contributing Editor; Edgar Kloten, University of Hartford, Managing Editor.

The subscription total for CATHOLIC THEATRE is 3807; for DRAMA CRITIQUE, 793.

An advertising drive for CATHOLIC THEATRE was conducted by the Executive Office in early August with the mailing of letters, rate sheets and contracts and sample CATHOLIC THEATRES to some 200 prospective advertisers. The drive resulted in contracts amounting to \$1605.00.

An advertising campaign was conducted for DRAMA CRITIQUE by the Managing Editor in early September to 200 prospective advertisers. The drive resulted in contracts amounting to \$320.75.

COMMITTEES

A letter explaining the importance of committee work and a committee volunteer application was sent to the 10/1 members with their membership cards and mailed separately to the 2/1 members. Eighteen areas of interest were designated as needing volunteers. There were volunteers for 43 Committee positions with a number of the volunteers manning positions on two or three committees. This figure represents about 15% of the regular membership.

Nine research committees are in operation on the basis of personnel available and interests designated. They are: Three Standing Committees—the College, High School, and Children's Theatre Committees; six *ad hoc* Committees—Community Theatre, Grants and Scholarships, Career Guidance, National and Overseas Touring, Religious Drama, and Seminary Theatre. Of the nine committees, four represent new fields of interest; Grants and Scholarships, Career Guidance, National and Overseas Touring, and Religious Drama.

The following 1957-58 Committees were discharged: Convention Handbook Committee (work incomplete); Drama

Teaching Aids Committee (work incomplete); Library Committee (found to be superfluous); Constitutional Revision Committee (work completed). The three remaining Committees of 1957-58 are Standing Committees and two of them (the College and High School Committees) completed their 1957 assignment while the remaining one (Children's Theatre) operated without a 1958 deadline assignment.

LIBRARY

A summer scholarship of \$28 was granted to Immaculate Heart College Library for student assistance.

Approximately 20 titles were added to the Library.

Commas filmstrips were purchased for the film library: Development of the Physical Theatre; Stage Equipment Series, Stage Lighting Series, Scenery Construction Series.

SCHOLARSHIPS

NCTC obtained \$19,523.38 in scholarships for students. Of this amount, \$17,800, in scholarships was granted through the Chicago Drama Festival and \$1723.38 was expended for the scholarships to the Catholic Playwrighting Workshop at Loyola University, Chicago.

AWARDS

The Dinneen Award was granted to Mrs. Christopher Wyatt for outstanding promotion of Catholic values in theatre.

The Genesian Jewel was awarded to Sister Agnes Virginia, S.L.; Mrs. L. G. Bujarski; Rev. Samuel Listerman, S.J.

DONATIONS TO CHARITY AND EDUCATION

1000 copies of *Mime of Bernadette* were purchased for bonus distribution to the members

5 Masses were celebrated for deceased parents of members.

A contribution of \$50 was made to the Paulists for the Shrine of St. Genesius in the Church of Santa Susanna, Rome. The Conference title will appear on a bronze tablet with a perpetual votive light at the Shrine for the intention of NCTC growth, vitality, constructive progress in the fulfilment of its purposes.

The total of such Donations until November 30 amounted to \$200.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Publicity on the Dinneen Award received national Catholic press coverage. The various regions and units publicized their events with notable publicity worthy of special commendation obtained by Sister Vincentia, SSJ for the West Central Regional Convention. Emmet Lavery has promised to write an article for a national publication on the Playwrighting Workshop and the National Catholic Play Festival. Assistance was granted to the NCCW and to the National Conference of Catholic Charities.

REPRESENTATION

The Conference holds affiliate memberships in AETA, ANTA, the Catholic Broadcasters Association, and The Catholic Press Association.

The President represented NCTC at the National Convention of the NCCW at St. Louis in September as master of ceremonies for the session on The Church and The Arts.

The Conference is represented by the President on the Advisory Council of AETA. Other Conference members on AETA Boards include: Rev. Gilbert Hartke, O.P., Sister Honora, O.P. and Sister Margaret Mary, F.S.P.A., and Sister Mary Angelita, B.V.M.

Formal notice was given of NCTC's declining to be a
(Continued on Page 4)

... THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Charter Member of the National Council of the Arts in Education.

CONVENTION

Notre Dame University was selected as the site of the Twelfth Biennial, and August 18, 19, and 20 were selected as the dates.

A meeting of the Convention planning committee was held in Chicago on October 5.

A brochure mailing was prepared by Sister Mary Olive and sent to the Executive Office for release in early January.

PUBLICATIONS

The full length play list was revised by Mrs. Wyatt; the one act list, by Anna Helen Reuter. The copy was prepared for press at the Executive Office.

Both play lists will be published under one cover and released gratis to all life, sustaining and regular members in a general February mailing.

The College Monograph was published for sale to members at reduced prices beginning in September.

Twelve original plays were published for sale by the

National Catholic Play Festival whose headquarters were established at Clarke College, Dubuque, under the direction of George Herman.

Copy was prepared for the Directory which will be released gratis in a general mailing to life, sustaining and regular members in February.

AFFILIATED NEWS AND NEWSITEMS

"Hats off to Pat and her George!" say NCTC Affiliate Correspondents Elaine Kiess and Judy DeWenter—St. Boniface, Cold Spring Minnesota.

Carol Boehne—Our Lady of Mercy High, Detroit.

"Off Broadway—But Not Far"—received kudos from Jackie Brown — Our Lady of Mercy, Detroit.

Emmet Lavery's "American Portrait" gets the nod from Karen Kopko and Diane Cody of Our Lady of Mercy, Detroit; their affiliate sisters Linda Hughes, Patricia Kurtz, and Kathleen Freeman still hand the top rating to Father James Cunningham's story on Saint Genesius in the June, 1958, issue of CT.



SISTER PATENCIA LOOKS AT CHILDRENS' THEATRE

"Well, Sister, that's show biz."

EMILY PIERCE AUTHORESS AND COMPOSER On Children's Theatre . . .

The most skillful talents in the theatre always think twice before treading the boards with the most notorious of scene-stealers . . . the children. When you stop to think of it, what more natural progression is there from their own special world of make-believe to the adult world-of-pretending known as the stage?

Yet the transition can be terribly hard. Children attired in lovely costumes appear before us stiff as boards with their highly pitched voices chanting lines like so many wooden dolls, drilled within an inch of their lives.

Why is this? And what can be done about it? The answer is the teaching, and the teacher. First of all, a play is a play and not a projection of the classroom. The approach must be made by entering into the play with the children. For instance a whole class of children take turns making witches brew as the wicked stepmother in *Snow White*. The children think up the ingredients as the teacher encourages each child to more and more horrible things such as ink . . . glue . . . sand. The shy child in a class of this kind becomes carried away with the game and soon is thinking up wilder brew than anyone else. The pantomime game is an excellent one for breaking the ice with children. Each child makes up his own pantomime and the teacher guesses what it might be along with the other children. I must confess that one little third grader stumped me by doing a pantomime of transplanting flowers from pot to pot. But the child delights in these rewarding guessing games and learns a lot about movement from them. The most fun of all is the game in which two children work together and make up both dialogue and stage movement to a skit proposed by the teacher. One such skit around Christmas was given two sophisticated fifth graders who no longer believed in Santa. They were told to pretend that a child came downstairs while Santa was filling the stocking and to remember that the child didn't believe in Santa. One child insisted upon feeling Santa's tummy that was supposed to shake when he laughed like a bowl full of jelly.

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DALE O'KEEFE MOUNT ST. MARY'S COLLEGE, LOS ANGELES on the College Theatre Business . . .

It is worthy of note that only those community theatres that are financially solvent have been successful and continuing. Financial success, in large measure, has been due to careful planning and business management and rarely has a theatre survived on its artistic merit alone.

The most notable example of long-lived community theatre in the Far West, and particularly in this Southern California area, are more remarkable for their management than their artistic success. The Pasadena Playhouse, and the Long Beach Community Theatre, for example, prove that theatre can be a paying business and an artistic medium at the same time. Too few theatrical ventures have combined both. This is a result, I feel, of the lack of training in colleges in the practical aspects of theatre both on the undergraduate and graduate level. There is little question but that your college graduate can be your most influential force in community, parish, club, and school dramatic activity, professional, semi-professional, or amateur.

Over the past twenty years, there have been, for example, numerous groups formed in this area (Los Angeles) for the specific purpose of offering Catholic Theatre community and professional-wise. The sponsors or producers were principally college theatre graduates. All were doomed to failure before they began. There was little money, no budget, no business management, and always, frantic promotion in the last few weeks prior to production. I cite the more recent attempts in this area as most abortive, for the producers in one instance were highly promotive in securing the services of professional actors, but forgot entirely about promoting an audience. They, like so many others, felt that the very fact that they put on such an excellent play with such a well-known cast that the audience would automatically stream to the theatre. They didn't. Word of mouth cannot be depended upon to fill an auditorium when there are so few mouths.

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ROBERT FLEISSNER SPRING HILL COLLEGE, MOBILE, ALABAMA on Poetic Drama . . .

We decided early this fall to present poetic drama at Spring Hill, because our theatre is relatively small and our facilities somewhat limited. Short plays in which the interest is compressed seemed more appealing than ambitious undertakings which could not be justly presented. The Yeats play *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* is a very sophisticated one-act drama about an old woman who symbolizes the Spirit of Ireland. Michael Gillane is a young man about to get married. Shortly after the play opens, he enters to tell his family that he has just seen the priest. The members of the family discuss the wedding and all its details: clothes, dowry, etc. But there are overtones of a new excitement—inexplicable cheering is heard in the town. Then Cathleen arrives, entering of her own accord, and tells of her misfortune involving the loss of her "four beautiful green fields" (counties of Ireland). The Gillane boy is fascinated by this eccentric woman, especially when she begins to sing old Irish folk songs ("I will go cry with the woman," etc.). When she leaves, Michael follows her—even though his beloved struggles to keep him with her. Neighbors rush in and soon the news is out: the French have landed at Killala. Michael is to devote his life to driving the English from his country to keep Ireland for the Irish.

This is a very challenging play to put on, we found, because it does not play up to mass emotions and is subtle enough to leave many wondering. The allegory should be explained in the program.

The second play Gerhart Hauptmann's *The Ascension of Hannele*—or simply *Hannele* has been well translated from the German by Professor Horst Frenz and Miles Waggoner at Indiana University. It has two acts and is charged with emotional and psychological interplay. About the desire of a young German girl for the Beatific Vision, it beautifully inter-weaves folklore with

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N. C. T. C. In The St. Louis Area

Chief activity of the current season has been the re-organization of the high school student assembly. The fifteen NCTC member schools in the area have banded together and have elected a council with two student representatives from each school. Highlighting the activities of the new group are the monthly meeting of member schools held each month at a member school; editing a monthly newsletter, publishing the calendar of dramatic events at the area schools, reading up the Area Play Festival, and drumming up interest in the annual convention at Notre Dame.

St. Louis area claims over 400 NCTC affiliates in its fifteen-school organization. The Council is committed to preparing an assembly program of interest and value for presentation at the monthly get-togethers.

... EMILY PIERCE

One of the Santas pretended to give the child a Raggedy Ann doll which he had forgotten to paint and asked for a glass of water to finish the job. Then he tossed a ball to the child pretending to break a window. All this in pantomime with spur-of-the-moment action and dialogue.

In teaching projection it sometimes helps to take your actors out on an empty stage and point to the back row saying "Your Mother's sitting way off there. Say 'Here I am, Mother' ". During the course of the play rehearsal if his voice becomes small again it is sufficient to say, "do you think your Mother can hear you?"

This same technique can be used to teach the child sight lines. Children have an instinct, it seems to turn their backs on the audience. Again, remind them that Mother came to see their faces. Even allow some of them to go into the empty auditorium and watch their compatriots at work asking them if they can see and hear properly.

To sum up, the secret is to play with them and to make the stage the place you are playing with their own classmates as their most critical audience. When show time comes along and the lights dim there will be no stage fright because the stage has become the most fun that they have ever had. They will look forward to the play with practically no "butterflies" at all and YOU will be the only one who has them.

WORTH NOTING

✓ Sister Mary Susan, S.S.N.D., of the Academy of Our Lady, Chicago, has adapted A. A. Milne's *The Ivory Door* for a predominantly female cast, and recently directed the premiere of it at the Academy. At the end of next month, Sister will direct Therese Cuny's new play.

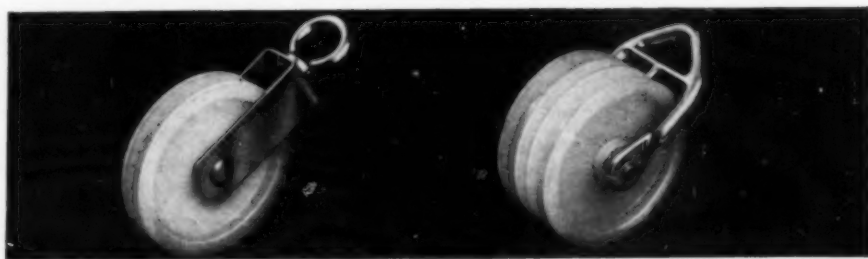


The King's Players of King's College, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, will present *Arsenic and Old Lace* this month for their second major production of the season. Their last production will be *The Cocktail Party* in May. Carl E. Wagner is Director of Dramatics at King's College. Staff designer is Vincent Scassellati. The Immaculate Conception Academy in Dubuque, Iowa, produced Father Thomas Carpender's original manuscript on Communistic Czechoslovakia, *Red Is The Morning Star*, last month. Sister Mary Generose, OSF, directed this play based on the experiences of Father Lloyd Glass, Maryknoll missionary.

Special feature is guest admission at all member-school plays. Membership in the organization is a dollar and a half, for which each member receives about twenty-five dollars' worth of entertainment, instruction, and social contacts. Not a bad investment!

Area officers are: Chairman: Rev. Robert A. Johnston, S.J., St. Louis U. Sec.-Treas.: Sister Mary Charity, CSJ, St. Joseph's Academy. Student Council Pres.: Richard Fox, St. Louis U. High. Vice-Pres.: Marsha Mason, Nerinx Hall High. Rec.-Secy.: Pat Reilly, Visitation Academy, Cor.-Secy.: Judy Harris, Eugene Coyle High. Editors: Anna Mae McLaughlin, Mercy High, Sue Fehl, Rosati-Kain, Diane Laufketter, Visitation.

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... DALE O'KEEFE

The Mount St. Mary's College group of players. "The Masquers", are truly unique, I believe, in the college dramatic field. Less than three years ago, upon joining the group as director, I set forth purposes that had an air of idealism about them. The dramatic group at the time consisted of a handful of young women who were devoting their time and energy to an extra-curricular activity. They were asked to consider the possibility of becoming a self-producing organization. After two years of offering plays that met the standard of some artistic success, the students, over the past summer raised \$500.00, a sum determined to be necessary to produce independently two major productions at the college. The Five Hundred Dollar figure was arrived at from the immediate cost of an average of recent productions, normal school expenses of faculty salaries, electricity, maintenance and the like not being considered. It was further determined that, at the end of the year, all monies in excess of the \$500.00 would be turned over to the school.

After the first production of *Medea* under the "500 Plan", the college for the first time in many years will realize some of its own expenses as a gift from the Masquers.

The students budgeted the production, co-signed the checks, initiated the bank account, managed the box-office and house, and most important, made the decisions in promotional costs and methods. Additional money spent for advertising and promotion paid for itself, and in consequence served well the over-all promotion of the college itself. The energy and interest of the students inspired college organizations, alumnae, and parent clubs to back their efforts resulting in additional advertising, radio and television 'spots' for the first time, and other incidental promotional activities.

According to the plan, with the assistance of the faculty, the students will determine what shows will be produced each season. In this way, they are best able to realize their own mistakes and their own triumphs measured in box-office receipts—methods, and production costs. Most assuring were the results in increased student interest and vitality, from the number of 25 to 30 students 'working' a show to 50 for the first production under the plan, an increase of nearly 500%.

Mount St. Mary's College is blessed with girls who are adept and vitally interested, who serve as administrators, business managers, production managers, and house managers, and who take this aspect more seriously than the individuals who play the leading roles. Many of these same girls will bide their time for the leading role as actresses in forthcoming productions.

Another unusual aspect, from the point of view of administration, is the offering of units of credit by the college for production and business management. The course is entitled "Theatre Workshop" and embraces all areas of theatrical activity. Grades and units depend on time worked, efficiency and achievement.

I feel that the production group idea is a reaction, in a sense, against treasurer offices in private colleges, where, if these are run efficiently, they must demand requisitions and orders months in advance. The best managed theatre organization cannot foresee the need of carpet tacks, the rental of an extra spear for properties, the small can of black paint needed for 'touch-up' just before the curtain opens. The need can be foreseen, but not the actual requirement. The wear and tear on the director's wallet, and the exacting trail of retribution, including the explanations—the explanation of the need of several sheets of gelatin which ordinarily does not come in sheets, and the circumspect question of whether these were used for punch to refresh the cast or for some other vital need of the theatre—are sufficient to tax the patience of the most Job-like director.

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Appreciation of Chinese drama, or Peking Opera, as the standard and more perfect form is often called, is something that comes from study and experience. It is an acquired taste. One must be familiar with the stories, understand the conventions, be in a position to grasp the significance of the music, at first discordant to the Western ear, to perceive the subtle harmonizing of music, word and action.

The stage in the Chinese classical theater is bare of scenery, as was the Elizabethan stage. Much is left to the imagination of the audience, but for the habitual drama fan with an easy knowledge of the stage conventions, there is little difficulty in compensating for the lack of scenery, the scarcity of props.

The one colored curtain serves as backdrop for all plays. A table and some chairs serve any number of purposes. Thus, a table may represent a judge's court, a restaurant counter, or even a bed. Mounting on a table may signify climbing a mountain. A mound may be represented by a chair on its side. Stage props are few; tasseled whips, fans, swords and spears being about all that are needed. An actor entering the stage waving a whip is riding a horse. A servant going before and performing acrobatic feats shows that the horse is spirited. Imaginary doors are opened and shut by graceful and symbolic movements of the hands.

One might be inclined to think that the Chinese classical stage, lacking varied scenery and stage props, would be drab. That is far from the truth. The color and glamor of classical drama are generously supplied by the gorgeous costumes, the variety of exotic make-up. The silk and satin robes are out of this world, and a number of actors in variously designed and multi-colored costumes at one time on the stage offers an eye-filling spectacle difficult to surpass.

The costumes to be worn by the different characters are strictly laid down by tradition. Through the costumes and the make-up it is possible to clearly identify on the first ap-

Chinese Theater

by Father Ivan
Society of St. Columba
The Father

pearance the role played by an actor. With but a small knowledge of Chinese theater, one may mark the heroes, the villains, the innocent maidens or the demimondaines before they have even opened their lips. From the color of the face make-up of certain characters one can tell if the person is honest, brave, deceitful, ill-tempered and so on.

There are no surprises for the habitual Chinese theatergoer. The plays and stories are all familiar; often a program is composed of unfinished parts of plays. The enthusiast is conversant with every detail of the plot, relishes each perfect intonation of the classic songs, is keenly aware and appreciative of a graceful gesture of the hand, a minutely executed movement harmonizing with the music.

For the uninitiated Westerner present at Chinese opera for the first time the experience may prove shattering. The clashing of cymbals, the high pitched notes of the stringed instruments, the falsetto singing, all result in what the untrained ear might easily term cacophony. Though the colorful costumes appeal to the eye, and many of the movements are the very poetry of motion, yet the apparent exaggeration of the actions, the seeming tediousness of sometimes slow and exact gestures, bewilder the Westerner unfamiliar with this type of art. Lacking a background knowledge of the stories, an understanding of the historical and religious or legendary symbolism, without a script to hand, any pleasure derived from the dazzling spectacle may well be offset by the recollection of musical discord and long and unintelligible songs rendered in strange keys.

One must be educated to an appreciation of the classical Chinese theater. And while many Westerners in China never take the trouble to understand Chinese opera, yet for those who have the patience to acquire the necessary knowledge, who do not allow first impressions to deter them, the reward is great. Chinese classical drama has been described as the most perfect thing of its kind, and for the connoisseur there are in it rare and very special pleasures not to be found elsewhere.

Considering what we have said above, it might be asked how a Chinese opera group such as toured Europe last year could hope to entertain Western audiences. Actually, they got rave notices all over. Theater-goers everywhere were delighted with them. Each play was preceded by a commentary and explanation in English, to facilitate understanding. Moreover, the plays were selected and modified to conform more to Western tastes, plays with action and acrobatics being favored, and the longer songs were shortened or omitted altogether.

Since returning to Taipei the group has on a few occasions repeated the performances as they had been modified for European audiences. While the genuine Chinese opera-lovers found the results disappointing, missing many of the traditional

Classical Theatre

er Ivar S. McGrath,
Columban, reprinted from
the Far East.

songs dear to their hearts and finding the accent on action and acrobatics rather naive, yet strangely enough many of those younger Chinese who have little interest in the traditional theater, found the revised versions much more to their liking.

Included in the 50-member Operatic Group of the Republic of China were three Catholics. The group put on shows in 14 European cities, and while in Rome the Catholics were granted an audience with the Holy Father. For them it was the highlight of the tour, easily surpassing both the excitement of enthusiastic receptions by audiences, and the sights in strange cities. They remember with gratitude the kindness of fellow Catholics in Europe, of certain bishops and priests. In Dublin they were received by Archbishop John McQuaid.

Two of the Catholics in the group are typical of those who form such drama troupes. One is rather exceptional in that she is not a professional. The required training for the Chinese classical theater is long and intensive, usually begun in childhood. In this sense it is a full-time career and the members of any good drama company are professionals.

Miss Mary Yang Chu-chun, however, though not a professional, was invited to travel with the official group. Miss Yang is a very talented young lady who comes from a cultured family where the interest in Chinese opera was great. Because of talent and interest she was trained in the technique of the classical theater from childhood, retaining her interest through school and college, being a star performer in school drama. A graduate of the College of Law and Commerce in Taipei, she now holds a position with a commercial company. Chinese opera continues to be her chief interest and hobby, and she has found time for further training in her free time. A native of the China mainland, and like the other members of the operatic group, a refugee from Communism, 22-year-old Miss Yang was converted and became a Catholic while in Free China.

Mr. Peter Tsao Yuan also became a Catholic since coming to Taiwan. He is a female impersonator, trained for the classical theater since a child, and a professional for whom the theater is a lifework. Female impersonators have always been part of the Chinese drama, and at one period of history women were barred entirely from the stage. Although today actresses are common in the classical theater, yet female impersonators are the most popular and invariably play the leading female roles. The tradition of female impersonators is so strong that even today actresses are obliged to sing in a falsetto similar to that of the actors who play female roles.

Both Mary Yang and Peter Tsao play the roles known as Ch'ing Yi (Black Dress) or those of dignified respectable young women. The singing of the Ch'ing Yi roles are considered particularly pleasing to the ear.



The third Catholic member of the touring operatic group was Mr. Luke Chang Chin-pei. Though not an actor, Mr. Chang was a very important member. He is a make-up expert. Because of the great variety of face-painting (some 250 styles), the elaborate coiffeur, the many kinds of false beard, the exact requirements for shading and retouching eyes and eyebrows, skilled and ingenious make-up services are essential. The art of make-up for the Chinese theater is quite specialized, and the result of long years of study. Luke Chang has been a Catholic for many years.

It is of interest to note that both Mary Yang and Peter Tsao were converted to Catholicism through the efforts of Chinese priests. It is probable that only Chinese priests have sufficient knowledge of the classical theater to forge that bond of sympathy which is normally the first essential in the work of conversion.

The first full-length written plays, with annotations and stage instructions, appeared during the Yuan or Mongol Dynasty (A.D. 1279-1368) and numerous written plays date from this period. During the Ming Dynasty that followed (A.D. 1368-1643) there were further developments in drama, but the drama in the form we now know it dates from the last of the Chinese dynasties, the Ch'ing or Manchu (A.D. 1644-1911). The Ch'ing Emperors were great theater lovers, and one of them built a magnificent theater in the old Summer Palace at Peking. The Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi built a famous three storied stage in the palace grounds and even took part herself in private performances.

Accompaniment to the singing in Chinese opera is normally supplied by a two-stringed instrument sometimes known as the Chinese violin. The music of this instrument is quite piercing. A sharp-toned drum gives the tempo for the singing and also serves to some extent in directing the entire or-

(Continued on Page 13)

PLAYWRITING CONTESTS

... UNITED NATIONS

A nationwide playwriting contest for one-act plays is being sponsored by the United Nations Association of Los Angeles. The theme for plays, as announced in the contest brochure will be "The work and ideals of the United Nations in human drama." Plays must be submitted not later than June 1, 1959 and the winners will be announced the following September.

Judges for the contest include five of the nation's leading playwrights: Robert Anderson, Paddy Chayefsky, William Inge, Emmet Lavery and Dory Scharf. Kenneth Macgowan, professor emeritus of Theatre Arts at University of California at Los Angeles, is chairman of the advisory board for U.N.A.L.A.

Promise of immediate production of one or more of the prize-winning plays gives writers great incentive to put forth their best efforts to place in this contest. During U.N. Week, October 1959, in Los Angeles the plays will be produced as a featured and widely publicized event by the United Nations Association with the full cooperation of A. N. T. A., the American National Theatre and Academy, of Greater Los Angeles.

Prizes offered in this contest are \$500 first, \$250 second, and \$100 third. In the contest brochure, it is also stated that the local United Nations Association which is sponsoring the contest, reserves the right to negotiate with authors for both stage production and publication of all plays submitted. It is the hope of the sponsoring organization that a sufficient number of good plays will come out of this contest to justify the printing of a book.

Contest rules state that plays should have at least three characters with background and props kept at a workable minimum. Playing time is limited to from between twenty and forty-five minutes.

Each manuscript submitted must be accompanied by a letter from the author containing the author's name and address, the title of the manuscript, a statement that it is original with the author, has not been commercially published or professionally produced, and that it is submitted for entry in the contest pursuant to the rules.

Further contest rules include the provision that the author send three copies of each play, that all manuscripts be typed double-space on one side of the page only and bound or stapled on the left side.

The author's name and address and the title of the play must be on one single page which will be removed before submission to the judges. The title of the play, but not the author's name, must be on the first page of the manuscript because authors will be identified only by a number which will be assigned.

Copies of the contest brochure may be obtained by writing to the United Nations Association of Los Angeles, 5110 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles 36, California.

... MASK AND BAUBLE

Winners in the annual Mask and Bauble Playwriting Contest have been announced at Georgetown University. James G. Duffy's *Man on the Road*, a tale of two convicts and a beggar, is in First Place. Second award winner is Arthur McConnell's *A Racy Lady*, a comedy about a sprightly grandmother who is a neighborhood bookie. *Were It Not For These Things* by Patrick Tombeau, is Third Place Winner, an adaptation of scenes from the Sacco-Vanzetti trial.

Honorable Mention was given to *Joe, Mae and the Kid*, a Mexican fable by John Guare.

All three plays were seen last month in the newly refurbished Holy Trinity Theatre, at 36th and O Streets.

Student directors staging the three plays were David Knapp, Allen Pollard and Bob Lyons.

Judges of the fifteen entries in the contest were novelist Riley Hughes of the Georgetown English Department, and Rev. Paul Donovan, S.J., and Mr. Donn Murphy of the Mask and Bauble.

... CATHOLIC CHARITIES

The National Conference of Catholic Charities announces a playwriting contest open to all Catholic High Schools in the United States. This project is being undertaken for the Golden Jubilee of the National Conference which is to be celebrated in New York City at their 1960 annual meeting.

The National Conference is looking for a one act play the theme of which will indicate a modern and realistic interpretation of the parable, "The Good Samaritan." For a number of years the National Conference has been encouraging personal service among students throughout the United States and it has initiated this contest in order to highlight personal participation in all walks of life.

The winning High School will be awarded a plaque. In addition, the play will be produced at the annual meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Charities to be held at the Hotel Statler, New York, in the Fall of 1960.

To be eligible for this competition all manuscripts must reach the offices of the Catholic Playwrights' Circle, Clarke College, Dubuque, Iowa, not later than June 1st, 1959, and should be addressed to George Herman, Chairman.

All the details of this contest have not as yet been decided upon but more information will be forthcoming.

... DALE O'KEEFE

The lack of school budget for theatre in private schools has not been just a personal trial and an individual experience. Certainly, every school has its departmental budget, but try to fix that budget aimed toward those nebulous fields called promotion and publicity. The pre-planned publicity budget with a definite end in mind and well spent promotional activity has always paid for itself, and is as necessary to theatre as the play itself. A producer or director must know in advance, however, what he has to spend. Explaining his evaluation of a publicity program to a disinterested third party who can only think in terms of 'on hand' gives the whole thing an aspect of "wild ideas". There should be more wild ideas, actually, even in as sedate an institution as college theatre.

The measure of success under the plan of a student producing organization is felt in the students themselves. The director finds himself engulfed by the "many-idea" side of things. Though doing it yourself is far simpler than explaining it all done, the dividends in increased students interest and knowledge of the many facets of theatrical activities are payment enough. The college certainly owes this training and experience to its students. For, after all, isn't that what college theatre is here for.

... ROBERT FLEISSNER

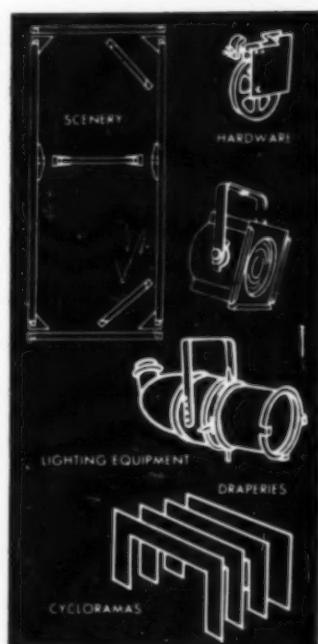
Christianity—as Undset is so capable of doing in the novel. The theme is love and death, if you wish: it is about Hannele's cruel step-father, her desire to be rid of him and her consequent hearing of Christ's Voice in the water, her sojourn in a poorhouse, her love of her rescuer (Gottwald), and, finally, her visions and ultimate death. Her demise becomes a mystical marriage with Gottwald symbolizing salvation as a Christus figure.

The most striking thing about the Hauptman play is that it is so very sincere. It cannot be too carefully analyzed by anyone interested in understanding art didactically. The author, although not Catholic himself, expresses a truly Catholic spirit—and, when one hears Hannele's mother's voice telling of having suffered for the girl, of drinking "golden wine" finally in Heaven, and of the children of God being like "blue lightning in the night," it all sounds, at least to me, saint-like. There are angels swinging censers in the play, a special "Dark Angel of Death," tramps (naturalistically yet tastefully presented), a little Village Tailor, a Judge, a Doctor, and many other picturesque and stimulating figures. A few parts have to be cut for an effective production (e.g. part of the long speech of The Stranger at the end). It needs to have a good Hannele and has to be technically proficient—otherwise its fragility or delicacy appears sentimental.

We started our evenings here with a reading of Archibald McLeish's *Ars Poetica*. I believe this was a most effective introduction to our poetic dramas.



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HEY THERE!

This program on Channel 7 each Friday at 5:30 P. M. is the only all-student written, directed and produced show on the Airways. Three NCTC-ers play an important role in it, so I shall try to tell you a bit about it.

It all started with auditions in July. Ohio Valley teenagers, some having a genuine interest in television and producing, some merely curious, and some looking for summer experience, readily filled out audition blanks supplied them by the local television station, WTRF-TV. They answered such questions as "Would you prefer announcing to properties?" or "What are your activities, both inside and outside of school?" and "Do you write for your school newspaper?"

Later, the results of the auditions were announced and twelve students representing six local high schools sat down earnestly to prepare the first show. Typists, writers, singers, comedians blended their talents and, as a result, "Hey There!" made its debut on August fifteenth to a puzzled but curiously interested viewing audience. The show was proclaimed an immediate success and it set the pace and pattern for succeeding presentations.

Since "Hey There!" was first initiated such original acts as Terrible Touhy's Football predictions, "Eloise" pantomimed by Judy Mowrey, Local Yokel with Dave Sailer, Fashion Comments by Gloria Gwynne, Joe Hughes and The Car Club, and many models, including Mary Ann Schreiber and Margie Frabell from St. Joseph's, have added their part to the delight and entertainment of thousands of Ohio Valley teenagers.

"Hey There!" continued to grow and to organize its staff. Patti Adams of our St. Joseph Academy won the distinction of being named producer. Her untiring efforts, combined with a natural flair for what makes a good show, are largely responsible for "Hey There's!" success. Working together, the members of the staff have found that T.V. is fun even if it does call for hard work and precious time from an already-crowded schedule.

—Margie Frabell.

STRANGER IN PARADISE

(BILL MISTEROVICH, SENIOR CLASS PRESIDENT AT ST. CLEMENT HIGH, CENTER LINE, MICH., A NEWCOMER TO THEATRE AND TO NCTC, COMMENTS ON SAINT GENESIOUS AT THE DETROIT GENESIAN PLAY FESTIVAL.)

The theatre seems a strange place for a takeoff for heaven, or at least I thought so when I read the words, "and God hung a star on his dressing room." But the title intrigued me, so I read on, and I discovered that Saint Genesius fellow who spends his heaven looking after the National Catholic Theatre Conference.

Genesius was a most ingenious comedian. He knew Diocletian's particular allergy for Christian Baptism, so funnymen Genesius dreamed up a bur-ley-que of Baptism that had those fat old Romans rolling off their couches. Genesius really hated the Christians. In fact, he hated his own family because they were Christians, so he gave his act all he had.

His premiere was scheduled for a particularly merry party thrown by Diocletian for some of his closest bawdy friends. Genesius played the leadup to the climax with a shrewd humor that had his audience howling with laughter. But then something happened. Right in the middle of the most sacrilegious burlesque of Baptism, Genesius suddenly jumped up and hollered, "I believe!" "I believe!" Well, his audience thought that this was part of the act, so they howled all the louder. But Genesius wasn't fooling. He stood there in the midst of that roaring mob and asked to be counted among those he had ridiculed.

When his audience recovered from the shock, they howled equally loudly for his blood, and Genesius was baptized—in his own blood. He had finished his only one great role—"and God hung a star on his dressing room."

To be a great actor and a great saint, all in one, doesn't seem to me to be an exactly easy job—in the world of Genesius or in our world today. So I think I understand why the National Catholic Theatre Conference has placed itself under the protection of the Comedian on Cloud Number Seven.



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chestra. The cymbals, gongs and drums play an essential role in the swift, complicated, and acrobatic combats of the Military plays, and each movement of spear or sword, every action of the hand or foot, every leap or somersault, is closely synchronized with the music, until the kaleidoscopic and clashing finale, when action and music cease with split-second precision.

Adding to the initial confusion of the Westerner at his first Chinese opera, is the behavior of the audience. Dazzled by the pageant of color on the stage, possibly deafened by the crescendo of sound during a Military play, the new-comer is further distracted by the apparently unceremonious conduct of the audience.

People chat, nibble melon seeds, eat oranges, stroll occasionally out of the theater during the performance to return in an equally nonchalant manner later. Children cry, run up and down the aisles, even sometimes venture to the edge of the stage to obtain a better view. It is only when a noted actor is singing a well-loved song that the onlookers subside into silence, broken by an occasional "Hao!" (Good) when some difficult piece of singing has been perfectly rendered. The audience similarly voices its appreciation of a well-executed movement with loud cries of "Hao!" No effort is made to curb the freedom of speech and movement of the audience, and the atmosphere of the traditional Chinese theater is friendly and informal. When we remember that programs usually continue for some five hours it is understandable that certain leeway must be allowed.

Another convention of the Chinese theater which at first dismays the uninitiated Westerner is the casual manner in which stage attendants enter and leave the stage during the actual performance. A stage-hand dressed in everyday clothes will cross the stage in the middle of an act to place, remove, or rearrange a chair or a cushion. Even more astonishing for one habituated to the Western theater, an attendant will walk on stage with a teapot from the spout of which an actor may drink at the end of a long and fatiguing song. It may be all rather confusing to the Westerner, but it is part of the charm of the classical Chinese theater.

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"The Christmas Troubadour" — a Premiere!

BY MARY ALICE DUQUETTE, GRADE 11

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"Lord, Make Me an Instrument of Thy Peace!" was the theme of the premiere of *The Christmas Troubadour* but peace was a word not spoken of for three weeks prior to curtain time.

Sister Denise Mainville O.P. descended upon our school in late November with brief case in hand, looking not quite like all the other Dominicans we had ever seen. Our suspicions of the difference were confirmed when the announcement that tryouts for Sister Denise's original operetta in three acts would begin later that week, and that Sister Denise herself would make the eliminations.

Tryouts were quick and efficient, and completed in four days. The leads, Francis Adriano, and Vittoria, were supported by a group of main characters, young peasants and twelve tonsured friars.

At the completion of tryouts, mimeographed scripts, this was a premiere, were handed out and a delightful story unfolded.

St. Francis, the poor man of Assisi, who loves the poor folk of Greccio, decides to have a stable built in the village square where, on Christmas Eve, the story of the Nativity would be pantomined. This done Francis and the friars sing to some of God's little birds and are rewarded by a beautiful ballet under a rain of color.

Francis then helps Adriano and Vittoria in their quest for love.

One scene is played between friars Morico, the sacristan, and Juniper over the Bishop's altar cloth which Juniper has given away to a pitiable old woman. Morico becomes so angry that he can hardly compose himself to sing.

All ends well however and the operetta closes after Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve when the Nativity is pantomined on a blue-lighted stage to a background of "Lord, Make Me an Instrument".

The play was blocked in the second week and finally one Saturday went on stage as a whole. During the practices of that week—with Sister Denise: choral groups were sometimes given new music to go with their voices; the script was partially changed; and music for dances was written according to the choreographer's needs.

Chaos is not a really good description of the final week, organized chaos would be more appropriate. In this week the play was staged. Lighting and sound effects were added to an almost finished work. Satin leaves were wired to real trees, used as a foreground to a cathedral flat covered with pressed wood sheathing instead of canvas. Chorals, dances and characters were to all appearances, ready and, except for about six changes in costumes, the matinee had "gone off" well. All we had to do now was pray and go on.

Opening night at five minutes to eight the only thing calming an excited cast was a tiny statue of St. Francis tucked on top of the light board. The curtain opened! Happiness, music and love poured out! The operetta was completed in a scene where Francis blessed the people with the tiny Babe.

"It is consummated". The last song is sung, the dust is swept away and the props and costumes are cleared.

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✓ WORTH NOTING

✓ The University of Hartford University Theatre recently presented Eugene O'Neill's *Beyond The Horizon* under the direction of Edgar Kloten as their February presentation. Two benefit performances were presented in addition to their regular run at the New Angle stage.

✓ Ambassador Herve Alphan of France and Madame Alphan have accepted the invitation of the Mask and Bauble society of Georgetown University to be guests at their production of *The Madwoman of Chaillot* in celebration of International Theatre month. Donn Murphy, Catholic University graduate, is director of the Mask and Bauble.

✓ Immaculate Heart High School's production of *Caesar and Cleopatra* took first place at the Catholic Theatre Play Festival held at Immaculate Heart College last month. Second place went to San Gabriel Mission's *Casanova, Jr.*, and third place to St. John Bosco's *Summer Comes To The Diamond O.* Penelope Chandler was awarded the prize as "Best Actress" for her portrayal of Cleopatra, and Brian Avery was voted "Best Actor" for his Caesar.

✓ The Nebraska Catholic Theatre's 4th Annual One-Act Play Festival was held last month at the College of St. Mary, Omaha. Dr. Lewin Goff, director of the University theatre at Kansas University, was critic judge. The winner of the Festival will represent the Nebraska area at the Regional Festival, April 4, at Atchison, Kansas.

✓ The Senior class of Madonna High School in Aurora, Illinois, will produce Shaw's *Pygmalion* arena-style April 10 through the 14th. Under the excellent direction of Sister M. Judine, OSF, the *Theatre Des Femmes*, drama club at Madonna, have produced *Her Steps Are Canticle* by Sr. Mary Francis, PC, and *The Glories of a Thousand Years* in conjunction with the Glee Clubs and the Madonna orchestra.

✓ The final production of the season for St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, will be Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* scheduled for May. The Columbine Club, school dramatic society, also presents a full laboratory program during the school year. Donald Rathgeb, former member of Players Incorporated, has joined the staff as Technical Director, and will appear in *Love's Labors Lost*, the next production at St. Mary's.

✓ Mount St. Mary's College in Los Angeles recently presented a panel discussion on educational drama under sponsorship of the Masquers, drama group of the college. Participating were Miss Irene Tuttle, of radio, television, and motion pictures; Miss Kate Drain Lawson, designer and ANTA committee chairman; Mr. William Coarkin, president of the Drama Teachers' Association of Southern California; Mrs. Joseph Morton, professional dancer; and Mr. Albert McCleery, NBC executive producer. Mr. Jack Morrison, past president of AETA, was chairman.



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